There are a number of potential barriers to supporting [lesbian](https://www.stonewall.org.uk/help-advice/faqs-and-glossary/glossary-terms#lesbian), [gay](https://www.stonewall.org.uk/help-advice/faqs-and-glossary/glossary-terms#gay), [bi](https://www.stonewall.org.uk/help-advice/faqs-and-glossary/glossary-terms#bi), [trans](https://www.stonewall.org.uk/help-advice/faqs-and-glossary/glossary-terms#trans) and [queer](https://www.stonewall.org.uk/help-advice/faqs-and-glossary/glossary-terms#queer) (LGBTQ+) children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

It's important to understand that whilst some children and young people with SEND might be [asexual](https://www.stonewall.org.uk/help-advice/faqs-and-glossary/glossary-terms#asexual) and/or [aromantic](https://www.stonewall.org.uk/help-advice/faqs-and-glossary/glossary-terms%22%20%5Cl%20%22aromantic), not all are. Some individuals may not accept that a child or young person with SEND knows their own mind when it comes to [orientation](https://www.stonewall.org.uk/help-advice/faqs-and-glossary/glossary-terms#orientation) or [gender  identity](https://www.stonewall.org.uk/help-advice/faqs-and-glossary/glossary-terms#gender-identity). Children and young people with SEND are more likely to experience others thinking their gender identity or orientation is a phase or confusion, or that they are too susceptible to outside influences. If staff truly listen to both the words and actions of the child or young person, often they demonstrate a very clear understanding and sense of self.

Arguments may be presented around an LGBTQ+ child or young person with a learning disability lacking capacity, especially if members of their family are struggling to accept their identity. However, many parents will be their child’s strongest advocate. If this is the case, still be sensitive to the fact that they may have fears for their child because they are different in an additional way. It is important to support and advocate for the needs of the child or young person and to educate others involved in the child or young person’s life. Where needed, seek support and advice from your Local Authority, along with local and national groups. Often a child or young person’s words or actions are automatically attributed to them having SEND without considerations of other factors, such as their orientation or gender identity. This might include: preferences for clothing types or hair length being seen as a sensory need; fear of change at puberty; behaviours described as a new special interest, fascination, curiosity or phase.

You can support staff, parents, carers, families and wider professionals to understand that a child or young person with SEND is just as likely to be LGBTQ+ as any other person. It is essential that the child or young person is accepted for who they communicate they are, and that support is given (if needed) for them to explore what they are experiencing. Not all children and young people will go on to identify as LGBTQ+. It is important that they know it is OK to change their minds, but it is equally important that gender identity or orientation differences are not dismissed.